

CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

FILE NAME: 40 Power Street

DATE OF APPLICATION: March 19, 2003

APPLICANT: Mintahoe Hospitality Group and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

DATE OF HEARING: April 8, 2003

HPC SITE/DISTRICT: St. Anthony Falls Historic District

CATEGORY: Contributing

CLASSIFICATION: Historic Variance and Certificate of Appropriateness

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Greg Mathis

DATE: April 2, 2003

A. SITE DESCRIPTION & BACKGROUND:

The building at 40 Power Street is located at the southern end of Nicollet Island, in the St. Anthony Falls Historic District. Historically known as the William Brothers Boiler Works, it is one of the few industrial buildings that remain on the island. Constructed in 1893, shortly after a fire ravaged the southern half of the island, the boiler works is one-story brick building with a gable roof. The building is defined by brick pilasters that create a strong, but simple pattern of panels across the façade, arched doorways, and a large cupola. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board acquired the building in 1986 and rehabilitated it for use as a reception hall. A painted wall sign that read “Nicollet Island Pavilion” existed the cupola from the late 1980s until the mid-1990s.

B. PROPOSED CHANGES:

The applicant is applying for an Historic Variance and a Certificate of Appropriateness to install a 12’0” tall by 26’0” wide (312 sq. ft.) painted wall sign on the north elevation of the cupola. The sign will read “Nicollet Island Pavilion” in 3’0” tall, Copperplate Gothic font, white letters painted directly on the wall of the cupola. The top of the sign will be located 52’0” above grade. The sign will be illuminated by two light fixtures that were installed in the late 1980s.

The property is zoned R1A. The Zoning Code sign standards for park property in residential districts allows one wall sign not to exceed 32 sq. ft., with a maximum height of 12’. Since the zoning code does not allow variances for signs in residential districts, the applicant is asking for an Historic Variance to allow the proposed, 312 sq. ft. sign located 52’ above grade.

C. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:

GUIDELINES FOR SIGNS & SIGNAGE FOR HISTORIC PROPERTIES & DISTRICTS (1993)

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Signage:

- a. Maintenance or restoration of existing historical signs is encouraged in lieu of sign replacement. Signage shall promote the building, name and/or address, or a business, company or product associated with the building. Signage for a business that is not associated with or located within the buildings is not acceptable.
- b. The number of signs allowed shall be limited to one (1) per primary facade. The primary facade shall be the elevation of the building located adjacent to the street. Corner lots may have a sign located on each primary facade. All signage shall be located such that it does not obscure the architectural features of the buildings.

Signage Colors:

- a. Sign colors shall be compatible with colors of the building and its surroundings. No bright, day-glow or fluorescent colors shall be allowed.
- b. Sign colors shall be limited to four (4) per sign with at least three (3) being of the same hue, saturation, or brightness.

Codes:

- a. All signage is subject to Minneapolis building and zoning codes.

Installation:

- a. Signage is usually of a temporary nature. Thus, signage installation must have a minimal impact on the building and must allow the building to return to its original condition upon signage removal.

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC SIGN TYPES

Painted Signs or Murals:

A painted sign is painted directly onto the surface of buildings.

- a. Size: the size of the sign or letter size is unrestricted.
- b. Material: the sign material shall be a weatherable exterior paint suitable for masonry.
- c. Location: painted signs are allowed only on non-primary facades unless supported by historic or physical documentation.
- d. Preparation: maintenance or restoration rather than replacement of existing painted signs is encouraged.
- e. Content: painted signs and/or murals are reviewed by the commission on a case-by-case basis for their artistic quality, intent, and impact on the features of the building's architecture.

ST. ANTHONY FALLS HISTORIC DISTRICT SIGN CRITERIA (1976)

- 1.0 Sign elements shall be compatible to the historic district, to the building (if on premise) and to the surroundings.

- 1.1 Sign dimensions shall be large enough to be visible to normal street traffic, but small enough to allow the building's basic design to be visible.
- 1.3 The type of sign shall compliment the structure enhancing the building's design and materials.
- 1.4 The surface design such as the identification symbol (logo), the lettering and related patterns or pictures shall be harmonious with the related structure's age and design.
- 2.0 Signs shall not block or alter views of vistas important to the historic district's character, such as the Mississippi River, the steeple of Our Lady of Lourdes church or the Stone Arch Bridge.
- 3.1 They shall not be a nuisance to persons using the public right-of-way, or to adjoining properties, by virtue of their size, placement, height or brightness.
- 3.2 They shall convey messages and information to the public in an effective manner.

MINNEAPOLIS ZONING CODE
CHAPTER 543. ON-PREMISE SIGNS

ARTICLE III. SPECIFIC SIGN STANDARDS BY ZONING DISTRICTS

543.100. Specific sign standards.

Table 543-1. Specific Standards for Signs in the Residence and OR1 Districts

Use	Sign Standards
INSTITUTIONAL AND PUBLIC USES	
Social, Cultural, Charitable and Recreational Facilities	
Athletic field	One wall identification sign not exceeding thirty-two (32) sq. ft. Maximum height of twelve (12) ft. or top of wall, whichever is less. On a corner lot, two such signs per building. In addition, one (1) freestanding ground sign not exceeding thirty-two (32) sq. ft. in area and eight (8) ft. in height. Either the wall sign or the ground sign, but not both, may be illuminated.
Cemetery	
Golf course	
Library	
Park	

CHAPTER 599. HERITAGE PRESERVATION REGULATIONS

ARTICLE IX. HISTORIC VARIANCE

599.490. Purpose. This article is established to encourage the preservation and reuse of landmarks and properties in historic districts by providing the commission with authority to recommend departure from the literal requirements of any of the applicable zoning regulations.

599.510. Hearing on application for historic variance. The commission shall hold a public hearing on each complete application for historic variance as provided in section 599.170. Following the public hearing, the commission shall make findings with respect to the proposed historic variance and shall submit the same together with its recommendation to the zoning and planning committee of the city council.

599.520. Required findings for historic variance. Before recommending approval of a historic variance, the commission shall make findings that the variance is compatible with the preservation of the property and with other properties in the area, and that the variance is necessary to alleviate undue hardship due to special conditions or circumstances unique to the property and not created by the applicant.

599.530. Historic variance conditions and guarantees. The commission may impose such conditions on any historic variance and require such guarantees as it deems reasonable and necessary to protect the public interest and to ensure compliance with the standards and purposes of this chapter.

599.540. City council decision. The city council shall make the final decision on all historic variances.

D. FINDINGS

Historic Variance

1. The William Brothers Boiler Works is a contributing property to the St. Anthony Falls Historic District.
2. The height and size of the proposed sign exceeds what is allowed by the city's zoning code. Chapter 543, On-Premise Signs, of the city's zoning code allows the property to have one wall sign not to exceeding 32 sq. ft., with a maximum height of 12'. There is no authorized variance for signage in residential zoning districts.
3. Section 599.490 of the Heritage Preservation Regulations authorizes the HPC to recommend a variance from any applicable zoning regulation to encourage the preservation and reuse of landmarks and properties in historic districts.
4. The proposed roof sign will identify the location of the property and will enhance the visibility and historic character of the property.
4. The HPC *Guidelines for Signs and Signage for Historic Properties and Districts* encourage the "maintenance or restoration of existing historical signs...in lieu of sign replacement." Historic photographs show that the cupola on the building had a painted wall sign during the period of significance for the district. While the proposed sign is not an exact replica of the historic sign, it is sensitive adaptation of the non-extant historic sign. Therefore, the type, size, and placement of the proposed sign is compatible with the preservation of the property and with other properties in the area.
5. The building is set back approximately 230' from the street. Given this considerable setback, a sign that complied with size and height requirements of the zoning code would not be legible from the street. Additionally, a sign that complied with the zoning code would not be consistent with the historic character of the property and the district. Therefore, the variance is necessary to alleviate undue hardship due to special conditions or circumstance unique to the property and not created by the applicant.

Certificate of Appropriateness

1. The William Brothers Boiler Works is a contributing property to the St. Anthony Falls Historic District.

2. Historic photographs show that there was a painted wall sign in the same general location as the proposed sign during the period of significance for the historic district.
3. The proposed sign complies with all of the general guidelines for signs and signage, and all of the specific guidelines for painted signs.

E. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the HPC make two motions.

First, staff recommends that the HPC adopt staff findings for the Historic Variance and forward to the City Council a recommendation to approve an Historic Variance to allow the proposed 12'0" x 26'0" painted wall sign subject to the following condition:

1. The Historic Variance is only valid for the proposed 12'0" tall by 26'0" wide painted wall sign. The sign cannot change in any way. If the sign is removed or painted over, a new application for an Historic Variance shall be required.

Second, staff recommends that the HPC adopt staff findings for the Certificate of Appropriateness and approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the painted wall sign as proposed with the following condition:

1. The Certificate of Appropriateness is only valid if the City Council approves an Historic Variance for the sign.